2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

vations one finds temperate zone forests. Typical for the area are numerous grasses growing along the mountainside and on top of hills. Among them, the most permanent in appearance and use are miscanthus grass and a dwarf bamboo. Panadanns bushes line the beaches and areas close to them. Pine trees are common. Fukugi trees grow in the village but also in the hinterland. Here and there cycad palms lend the scenery a special tropical touch. Wild flowers grow almost all year.

The heavy underbrush is the habitat of several species of poisonous snakes for which the Ryukyu Islands are notorious. The most common, the *habu*, a pit viper, feeds on rats and other small animals and often enters the actual village area. Since rats outnumber humans in Okinawa by an approximate ratio of three to one, these snakes find ample food. Their search sometimes takes them into the rafters of thatch-roofed houses. This danger is present from March until October. People are bitten if they happen to step on the hidden reptiles or sometimes while they sleep. Children are taught by their elders to be careful, and during our study no children were bitten.

Insects are another source of irritation. Mosquitoes attack quite viciously during the summer; fleas, which live in the sand and in straw or reed mats, inflict bites at any time but are seldom carried in clothes. Flies do not seem to annoy the villagers although they are thick wherever food is left in the open and near the pig pens and outhouses.

The number of motor vehicles passing through Taira is small. A few heavy lumber trucks and an occasional U.S. Army vehicle drive through the main street. Four buses daily, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, connect Taira with other villages in Higashi township and the rest of the island. Because traffic is sparse, and it is difficult to catch a ride, persons intending to leave the community in the middle of the day often take the 50-minute walk to the other side of the island where buses pass every 30 minutes on the coastal highway. Villages frequently take trips to the nearby provincial market town of Nago or even to Naha, the capitol.

THE CLIMATE

In spite of Okinawa's subtropical geographic position, it has distinct seasonal differences demanding appropriate adjustments in living routine and clothing. Temperatures in the Taira region may reach a minimum of 38 degrees in January and February and a maximum of 96 degrees in July or August. The average daily mean temperature,